1U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
White River Field Office
73544 Hwy 64
Meeker, CO 81641

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NUMBER: CO-110-2005-169-EA

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER: COC39350 (WREA)
COC68982 (EnCana)

PROJECT NAME: Powerline for EnCana Oil & Gas to be built by White River Electric, Access road and Air Monitoring Station (EnCana)

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Sixth Principal Meridian, Colorado
T. 4 S., R. 94 W.,
Sec. 9, SW¼NW¼, W½SW¼;
Sec. 16, W½NW¼, NE¼SW¼, NW¼SW¼;
Sec. 17, NE¼NE¼, NE¼SE¼.

APPLICANT: White River Electric Association, Inc. (WREA)
EnCana Oil & Gas (USA) Inc (EnCana)

ISSUES AND CONCERNS (optional): None

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

Background/Introduction: The original air monitoring site proposal was located on EnCana's private property, but since the facility requires electricity, a powerline would have had to be built up Cow Creek. At the pre-filing meeting with representatives from EnCana and White River Electric, it was suggested that other locations be considered (i.e. McCarthy Gulch and Rio Blanco Hill).

Proposed Action: The proposed action is for amending WREA's existing single-phase powerline located at the Rio Blanco Hill communication site in order to provide power to EnCana's proposed air monitoring station. Construction at this site will have to be completed outside of hunting seasons.

The line to the air monitoring station will proceed west from the Rio Blanco Hill communication site following an existing two-track. Twelve poles will be placed approximately 300-350 feet apart. Due to the terrain and foliage, very little brush or trees will be cleared. Equipment to be used during construction will be a 2 ton, 4-wheel drive digger/derrick truck, basic utility trucks,

4-wheelers for stringing wire, and possibly a backhoe if needed. The job will take one week to complete.

EnCana plans to install an air monitoring station to be located west of the Rio Blanco Hill communication site. EnCana proposes to install and operate an air pollutant and meteorological monitoring system with the proposed center point datum of the station being in UTM, Zone 13; 2462559.3 easting 4389425.74 northing. Installation of the station and the associated powerline is planned for spring of 2006. It is expected that the power line and monitoring station can both be constructed in one week.

A 10 x 8 x10 foot high metal building would be installed to house gas analyzers and computer equipment needed to gather, process, and electronically store air pollutant and meteorological data. The building would be heated or air conditioned to maintain and inside temperature of approximately 70° Fahrenheit. The station would be placed on a 12 x 10 foot concrete pad and enclosed inside a 6 to 8-foot security chain link fence with a locked gate. The site is fairly level and only a minor amount of grading would be required to construct the pad. The chain link fence would be placed about four feet beyond the concrete pad. Additionally, a 10-meter meteorological tower would be constructed adjacent to the building inside the fence. The gate would be placed such that the tower could be laid horizontal for maintenance of the systems on the tower. A total of 440 square feet (0.01 acres) of BLM land inside the fence would be disturbed.

The building would be transported to the site on a flat-bed truck. The only other construction-related vehicles would be those required to construct a concrete pad.

Access to the station site would be via a combined BLM and privately-owned road south from Piceance Creek Road. The road is improved to the Rio Blanco Hill communication site. The distance from Piceance creek road to the site is approximately 4.1 miles. No upgrades are anticipated for this road because of the low traffic volume associated with this project. A two-track unimproved road extends from the improved access road to the proposed site. No improvements to the two-track would be required for access to the site.

Access to the site will be every two weeks for maintenance checks and calibrations. Additional visits to the site would be required every three months for audits of the instruments. During times when the road would be snow covered, snowmobiles or similar vehicles would be used. During periods of spring thaw or excessive precipitation all-terrain vehicles (ATV) may be needed to get to the site.

No Action Alternative: Under the no action alternative the application would be denied.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT CARRIED FORWARD: None

NEED FOR THE ACTION: An application has been received for a powerline to service EnCana's mountain air monitoring station, an access road, and station site.

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW: The Proposed Action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with the following plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3):

Name of Plan: White River Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (ROD/RMP).

Date Approved: July 1, 1997

Decision Number/Page: Pages 2-49 thru 2-52

Decision Language: "To make public lands available for the siting of public and private facilities through the issuance of applicable land use authorizations, in a manner that provides for reasonable protection of other resource values."

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT / ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES / MITIGATION MEASURES:

STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC LAND HEALTH: In January 1997, Colorado Bureau of Land Management (BLM) approved the Standards for Public Land Health. These standards cover upland soils, riparian systems, plant and animal communities, threatened and endangered species, and water quality. Standards describe conditions needed to sustain public land health and relate to all uses of the public lands. Because a standard exists for these five categories, a finding must be made for each of them in an environmental analysis. These findings are located in specific elements listed below:

CRITICAL ELEMENTS

AIR QUALITY

Affected Environment: The proposed actions are not located within any special designation air sheds or non-attainment areas. The Flattop Wilderness area (class 1 airshed) is located approximately 24 miles to the east of the proposed actions.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Emissions from construction equipment may cause temporary reductions in local air quality. Exposure of soils from the cleared area could become airborne until revegetation efforts are established. Although, it is anticipated the construction activities would be so minor that there will be little effect on local air quality or to the Flattops Wilderness area.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Much needed information on air resources for the area would be lost without the construction of the site.

Mitigation: Apply adequate ground cover and seed disturbed areas as outlined in the vegetation section of this document.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: The proposed air quality monitoring station, new access route and new power line route have been inventoried at the Class III (100% pedestrian) level (Conner, 2005, Compliance Dated 10/28/2005) with no new cultural resources identified in the inventoried area.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action will not impact any known cultural resources.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no new impacts to cultural resources under the No Action Alternative.

Mitigation: 1. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not necessary)
- a timeframe for the AO to complete an expedited review under 36 CFR 800-11 to confirm, through the State Historic Preservation Officer, that the findings of the AO are correct and that mitigation is appropriate.

If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

2. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.

INVASIVE, NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: There are problems with several noxious weed species in the area. At the current repeater site there is yellow toadflax and houndstongue. Other weed species of

concern include burdock, spotted knapweed, bull, musk and Canada thistle. The yellow toadflax has been treated with herbicide but is still expected to occur in the area. Houndstongue has been treated throughout the area but still is a problem.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Site preparation and construction of the power line is expected to disturb less than 40 feet, too which would be suitable habitat for noxious weed establishment. The current situation of noxious weeds on site is not expected to change because of the proposed action. There is the opportunity for noxious weeds to be introduced on construction equipment and support vehicles. If noxious weeds establish on the project site the permit holder would be required to treat these infestations.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no changes from the current situation.

Mitigation: The permit holder is required to control noxious weeds resulting from the project development. Treatments will be in accordance with Bureau policy.

Reclamation should be implemented concurrent with construction and site operations to the fullest extent possible. Final reclamation actions shall be initiated within six months of the termination of operations unless otherwise approved in writing by the Authorized Officer.

Distribute topsoil evenly over the location and prepare a seedbed by disking or ripping. Drill seed on contour at a depth no greater than ½ inch. In areas that cannot be drilled, broadcast at double the seeding rate and harrow seed into the soil.

Use seed that is certified and free of noxious weeds. Seed certification tags must be submitted to the Field Manager.

Additional seed applications may be required to accommodate specific site conditions or if initial seed germination has failed.

Seed species used in reseeding disturbed areas will be based on the seed mixes identified in table B1 and B2 in the White River ROD/RMP. These mixes are based on Ecological Sites as determined by soils. For this site use native seed mix # 6 (see table below). Naturalized plant species will be allowed for reseeding on "at risk" and "unhealthy" rangelands and grazable woodlands.

Native Seed Mix #6		
Species (Variety)	Lbs. PLS per Acre	Ecological Sites
Bluebunch wheatgrass (Secar) Slender wheatgrass (Primar) Big Bluegrass (Sherman) Canby bluegrass (Canbar) Mountain brome (Bromer)	2 2 1 1 2	Alpine Meadow, Alpine Slopes, Aspen Woodlands, Brushy Loam, Deep clay Loam, Douglas-fir Woodland, Loamy Park, Mountain Loam, Mountain Meadows, Mountain Swale, Shallow Subalpine, Spruce-fir Woodland, Subalpine Loam

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Affected Environment: A number of migratory birds fulfill nesting functions in the project area's mountain shrub, big sagebrush, and aspen communities from late May through early August. Notable among these are woodland-nesting accipiters and buteo hawks that would be expected to use the proposed power poles as hunting perches.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Project timeframes are expected to coincide with the 2006 breeding season. However, because pole and facility installation activities would be brief at any given site and would occur immediately adjacent to an existing road, disruption to migratory bird nesting activity would be limited to a very few breeding pair, and the overall effect would be discountable at any landscape scale. Biweekly visits to the site on an established two-track road would not be expected to have further consequence on birds attempting to nest in adjacent shrubland habitats. Incidents of large bird mortality from electrocution would be effectively avoided through pole and conductor design.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no action authorized that would have potential to adversely influence migratory bird nesting activity.

Mitigation: The applicant will be responsible for employing the most-current raptor protection standards (i.e., minimum standards from "Suggested Practices for Raptor Protection on Power Lines: The State of the Art in 1996", Avian Power Line Interaction Committee, 1996) on all above ground electric service to prevent raptor electrocution.

WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID

Affected Environment: There are no known hazardous or other solid wastes on the subject lands. No hazardous materials are known to have been used, stored or disposed of at sites included in the project area.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: No listed or extremely hazardous materials in excess of threshold quantities are proposed for use in this project. While commercial preparations of fuels and lubricants proposed for use may contain some hazardous constituents, they would be stored, used and transported in a manner consistent with applicable laws, and the generation of hazardous wastes would not be anticipated. Solid wastes would be properly disposed of.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No hazardous or other solid wastes would be generated under the no-action alternative.

Mitigation: The applicant shall be required to collect and properly dispose of any solid wastes generated by the proposed actions.

WATER QUALITY, SURFACE AND GROUND (includes a finding on Standard 5)

Affected Environment: The proposed actions will be situated in the Cow Creek and Piceance Creek watersheds. Cow Creek is a tributary to Piceance Creek (tributary to the White River) and has been placed in stream segment 16 of the White River Basin. The remaining portion of the work area is located in the headwaters of the main stem of Piceance Creek and is listed in stream segment 14 of the White River Basin.

A review of the Colorado's 1989 Nonpoint Source Assessment Report (plus updates), the 305(b) report, the 303(d) list and the Unified Watershed Assessment was done to see if any water quality concerns have been identified. The State has classified stream segment 16 of the White River Basin as "Use Protected". The antidegredation review requirements in the Antidegredation Rule are not applicable to waters designated use-protected. For those waters, only the protection specified in each reach will apply.

Stream segment 16 has been designated by the state as beneficial for the following uses: Warm Aquatic Life 2, Recreation 2, and Agriculture. Minimum standards for four parameters have been listed, these parameters are: dissolved oxygen = 5.0 mg/l, pH = 6.5 - 9.0, Fecal Coliform = 2000/100 ml, and 630/100 ml E. coli. Stream segment 16 retained its Recreation Class 2 designation after sufficient evidence was received that a Recreation Class 1a use was unattainable.

Stream segment 14 has not been classified as use protected thus the Antidegredation review requirements in the Antidegredation Rule are applicable to this stream segment. The state has classified stream segment 14 as beneficial for the following uses: Cold Aquatic Life 1, Recreation 1b, and Agriculture. Minimum standards for four parameters have been listed, these parameters are: dissolved oxygen = 6.0 mg/l, pH = 6.5 - 9.0, Fecal Coliform = 325/100 ml, and 205/100 ml E. coli.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Traffic associated with construction may deteriorate the condition of the existing two-track elevating erosion rates. Increased erosion from the existing two-track will increase sedimentation to lower reaches of the affected catchment area.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None

Mitigation: To mitigate water being channelized down the roadway due to rut development, all activity must stop when soils or road surfaces become saturated to a depth of three inches.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for water quality: Water quality within the area of the proposed action currently meets water quality standards established by the state. No adverse impacts to water quality will result as a response to completion of the proposed actions.

CRITICAL ELEMENTS NOT PRESENT OR NOT AFFECTED:

No ACEC's, flood plains, riparian/wetland communities, prime and unique farmlands, Wilderness, or Wild and Scenic Rivers, or threatened, endangered or sensitive plants or animals exist within the area affected by the proposed action. For riparian and wetland communities and threatened, endangered and sensitive plants and animals, the Public Land Health Standards are not applicable since neither the proposed nor the no-action alternative would have any influence on water-dependent habitats or populations of, or habitats potentially occupied by, special status species. There are also no Native American religious or environmental justice concerns associated with the proposed action.

NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS

The following elements **must** be addressed due to the involvement of Standards for Public Land Health:

SOILS (includes a finding on Standard 1)

Affected Environment: The following data is a product of an order III soil survey conducted by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) in Rio Blanco County. The accompanying table highlights important soil characteristics. A complete summary of this information can be found at the White River Field Office.

Soil Number	Soil Name	Slope	Ecological site	Salinity	Run Off	Erosion Potential	Bedrock
42	Irigul channery loam	5-50%	Loamy Slopes	<2	Medium to rapid	Very high	10-20
43	Irigul-Parachute complex	12-45%5-30%	Loamy Slopes/Mountain Loam	<2	Rapid	Slight to high	10-20
58	Parachute Loam	25-75%	Brushy Loam	<2	Medium	Very high	20-40
59	Parachute-Rhone loams	5-30%	Mountain Loam	<2	Medium	Moderate to high	20-40

42-Irigul channery loam (5 to 50 percent slopes) is a shallow, well drained soil found on ridges and mountainsides. It formed in residuum derived from sandstone and hard shale. The native vegetation is mainly grasses and shrubs. Typically, the surface layer is grayish brown channery loam 5 inches thick. The underlying material is brown extremely channery loam 7 inches thick. Hard sandstone is at a depth of 12 inches. Depth to hard sandstone or shale is 10 to 20 inches. Permeability of this Irigul soil is moderate. Available water capacity is very low. Effective rooting depth is 10 to 20 inches. Runoff is medium to rapid, and the hazard of water erosion is very high.

43-Irigul-Parachute complex (5 to 30 percent slopes) is map unit is on ridges and mountainsides. The native vegetation is mainly grasses and shrubs. The Irigul soil is shallow and well drained.

It formed in residuum derived from sandstone and hard shale. Typically, the surface layer is grayish brown channery loam 5 inches thick. The underlying material is brown extremely channery loam 7 inches thick. Hard sandstone is at a depth of 12 inches. Depth to hard sandstone or shale is 10 to 20 inches. Permeability of the Irigul soil is moderate. Available water capacity is very low. Effective rooting depth is 10 to 20 inches. Runoff is medium to rapid, and the hazard of water erosion is very high.

The Parachute soil is moderately deep and well drained. It formed in residuum derived dominantly from sandstone. Typically, the surface layer is grayish brown loam 4 inches thick. The upper 20 inches of the subsoil is grayish brown loam channery loam, and the lower 8 inches is pale brown extremely channery sandy loam 6 inches thick. Sandstone is at a depth of 38 inches. Depth to sandstone or shale ranges from 20 to 40 inches. Permeability of the Parachute soil is moderate. Available water capacity is low. Effective rooting depth is 20 to 40 inches. Runoff is medium, and the hazard of water erosion is moderate to very high.

58-Parachute loam (25 to 75 percent slopes) is a moderately deep, well drained soil found on ridges and mountainsides. It formed in residuum derived dominantly from sandstone. Slopes generally face north. The native vegetation is mainly brush and grasses. Typically, the surface layer is grayish brown loam 4 inches thick. The upper 10 inches of the subsoil is loam, and the lower 10 inches is channery loam. The next layer is very channery loam 8 inches thick. The substratum is extremely channery sandy loam 6 inches thick. Fractured sandstone is at a depth of 38 inches. Depth to sandstone ranges from 20 to 40 inches. Permeability of the Parachute soil is moderate. Available water capacity is low. Effective rooting depth is 20 to 40 inches. Runoff is medium, and the hazard of water erosion is very high.

59-Parachute-Rhone loams (5 to 30 percent) are located on mountainsides and upland ridges. The native vegetation is mainly brush and grasses. Elevation is 7,600 to 8,600 feet. The Parachute soil is moderately deep and well drained. It formed in residuum derived dominantly from sandstone. Typically, the surface layer is grayish brown loam 4 inches thick. The upper 10 inches of the subsoil is grayish brown loam, and the lower 10 inches is grayish brown channery loam. The next layer is pale brown very channery loam 8 inches thick. The substratum is very pale brown extremely channery sandy loam 9 inches thick. Fractured sandstone is at a depth of about 38 inches. Depth to sandstone ranges from 20 to 40 inches. Permeability of the Parachute soil is moderate. Available water capacity is low. Effective rooting depth is 20 to 40 inches. Runoff is medium, and the hazard of water erosion is moderate to high.

The Rhone soil is deep and well drained. It formed in residuum and colluvium derived dominantly from sandstone. Typically, the upper part of the surface layer is dark grayish brown loam about 8 inches thick, the next 16 inches is dark grayish brown loam, and the lower part is grayish brown very channery loam 16 inches thick. The substratum is brown very channery loam 10 inches thick. Fractured sandstone is at a depth of about 50 inches. Depth to sandstone ranges from 40 to 60 inches. Permeability of the Rhone soil is moderate. Available water capacity is high. Effective rooting depth is 40 to 60 inches. Runoff is medium, and the hazard of water erosion is moderate to high.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Soil compaction resulting from construction operations will decrease infiltration and permeability rates elevating potential for erosive overland flows. Reduced ground cover associated with construction of the buried secondary conductor will leave soils exposed to erosional processes.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None

Mitigation: Avoid using the existing two-track when soils are saturated to a depth of three inches. Apply adequate ground cover and appropriate seed mixture (see vegetation section) to disturbed surfaces associated with the buried secondary conductor line.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for upland soils: Soils in the affected area currently meet standards set by the state. No changes to current soil health conditions are anticipated as a result of the proposed actions.

VEGETATION (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: The project site is primarily a mountain sagebrush site containing mountain big sage, antelope bitterbrush, snowberry, serviceberry, Letterman needlegrass, western wheatgrass, Kentucky bluegrass and a variety of forbs. This community is in mid-seral condition because of the abundance of Kentucky bluegrass and cheatgrass. This site produces an estimated 1500 pounds/acre.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: There would be disturbance of the vegetation communities as a result of construction activities. These disturbed areas are expected to produce sufficient vegetation cover for soil protection within two years and provide similar diversity to the parent community within ten years.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no change from the current situation.

Mitigation: No Additional mitigation.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Wildlife, Aquatic and Wildlife, Terrestrial)*:* The pre and post development plant communities will meet the public land health standards.

WILDLIFE, AQUATIC (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: The proposed project parallels an existing 2-track road along a gently sloping ridgeline in a higher-elevation (8200') vegetation community with strong herbaceous understory development. Perennial tributaries of Cow Creek lie on either side of this ridge, some 350-700' below and 1000-3000' lateral to the ridgeline crest. These small, limited

flow systems support simple invertebrate-based aquatic communities and do not directly or indirectly support vertebrate aquatic forms.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The installation of 12 power poles and a 10x12 foot building along a gentle-graded, existing two-track road in a productive, higher-elevation vegetation community would have no conceivable potential to influence relatively isolated channel-borne communities (e.g., sediment contribution).

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no action authorized that would have potential to influence aquatic communities.

Mitigation: None.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Terrestrial): The uplands in the vicinity of the proposed action currently meet the land health standards and do not adversely influence downstream aquatic conditions (e.g., excessive sedimentation). Because the proposed and no-action alternatives would have no reasonable potential to influence channel-borne resources in Cow Creek or its tributaries, neither alternative would have any effective bearing on the status of land health standards as applied to downstream aquatic communities.

WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: The proposed project area is occupied by deer and elk from April through December but the area's primary function is served as summer range that, because of its limited extent within the herd area, is categorized by the Colorado Division of Wildlife as critical habitat for deer and elk. The project is situated along an existing 2-track road in shrubland and herbaceous-dominated habitats and would involve limited vegetation clearing or surface disturbance (i.e., several hundred square feet).

The project spans habitats that are occupied by an array of resident and breeding populations of nongame small mammals and birds. The major communities include aspen woodlands and a complex intermixing of mountain big sagebrush, serviceberry, Gambel's oak, bitterbrush, and snowberry, with small grassland inclusions. Species associated with these habitats are widely represented and typical of each habitat. There are no narrowly endemic or rare species, nor are there obvious deficiencies in the composition of these populations.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Proposed project development would occur outside important functional periods for big game (e.g., parturition and lactation) and would be confined to an existing road corridor. This project would involve only diminutive levels of surface clearing that would have no effective consequence on the availability or abundance of vegetation-derived cover or forage for big game. Although biweekly visits to the monitoring station during the period of big game occupation could result in brief and very localized animal displacement, this effect would have no effective influence on overall animal distribution or the utility of surrounding habitat. Nongame populations would not be

substantively influenced by proposed project work. Installation activities would occur outside the breeding season. Surface clearing/grading associated with prefab building and power pole installation would be dispersed, confined to the margin of an existing road, and limited collectively to several hundred square feet (less than 0.25 acre). It is inconceivable that these operations would have any measurable influence on non-game populations at any landscape scale.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no action authorized that would potentially influence wildlife habitat or populations.

Mitigation: None.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Aquatic): The area encompassing the proposed action currently meets the land health standards for animal communities. Because the proposed and no action alternatives would have no effective influence on short or long term habitat utility, and their effect on animal distribution, nutrition, and behavior would be negligible, both alternatives would be consistent with continued meeting of the standards.

OTHER NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS: For the following elements, only those brought forward for analysis will be addressed further.

Non-Critical Element	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Access and Transportation			X
Cadastral Survey	X		
Fire Management	X		
Forest Management	X		
Geology and Minerals	X		
Hydrology/Water Rights	X		
Law Enforcement		X	
Noise	X		
Paleontology			X
Rangeland Management			X
Realty Authorizations		X	
Recreation			X
Socio-Economics		X	
Visual Resources			X
Wild Horses	X		

ACCESS AND TRANSPORTATION

Affected Environment: The proposed action will utilize BLM road 1253 and spur route 1253A as well as private access road. The spur route 1253A is located in a travel management area where motorized access is limited to existing routes from 12/1 to 8/14 and closed to motor vehicles from 8/15 to 11/30 of each year. Neither BLM 1253 nor 1253A are legally accessible to the general public by motor vehicle.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Due to the increase in use, BLM roads 1253 and 1253A may see an increase in road surface damage especially during early winter months as well as late spring as snow melts and recedes.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None.

Mitigation: None

PALEONTOLOGY

Affected Environment: The proposed air monitoring station, new access route and power line route are located in an area mapped as the Uinta Formation (Tweto 1979) which the BLM has classified as a Condition I formation, meaning it is known to produce scientifically important fossil resources.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: If it becomes necessary to excavate into the underlying rock formation to construct the air quality station footer, level toe road or excavate footers for the power poles there is the potential to impact scientifically important fossil resources. However, using an auger to set the poles provides an extremely limited point of access to the formation and it may be difficult to identify, evaluate or mitigate any fossil resources that might be impacted.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no new impacts to fossil resources under the No Action Alternative.

Mitigation: 1. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing paleontological sites, or for collecting fossils. If fossil materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear to be of noteworthy scientific interest
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not feasible)

If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

2. Except for the setting of power poles with an auger vehicle a monitor shall be required for any excavations into the underlying rock formation.

RANGELAND MANAGEMENT

Affected Environment: The project area is within the Cow Creek allotment. This allotment is under an allotment management plan which defers each pasture during the growing season. The livestock operation is a cow/calf operation running approximately 350 cattle. The proposed project is within the Long Ridge pasture which is used during the period 9/10 to 9/30.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Construction outside of the period 9/10 to 9/30 is not expected to have any impact on the livestock operation.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No change from the current situation.

Mitigation: None

RECREATION

Affected Environment: The proposed action occurs within the White River Extensive Recreation Management Area (ERMA). BLM custodially manages the ERMA to provide for unstructured recreation activities such as hunting, dispersed camping, hiking, horseback riding, wildlife viewing and off-highway vehicle use.

A portion of the proposed project area has been delineated a Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) class of Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM). SPM physical and social recreation setting is typically characterized by a natural appearing environment with few administrative controls, low interaction between users but evidence of other users may be present. SPM recreation experience is characterized by a high probability of isolation from the sights and sounds of humans that offers an environment that offers challenge and risk.

A portion of the proposed project area has been delineated a Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) class of Roaded Natural (RN). RN physical and social recreation setting may have modifications which range from being easily noticed to strongly dominant to observers within the area. However, from sensitive travel routes and use areas these alterations would remain unnoticed or visually subordinate. There is strong evidence of designed roads and/or highways.

Structures are generally scattered, remaining visually subordinate or unnoticed to the sensitive travel route observer. Structures may include utility corridors, microwave installations and so on. Frequency of contact is moderate to high on roads and low to moderate on trails and away from roads. SPM recreation experience is characterized by a moderate probability of isolation from the sights and sounds of humans that offers an environment that offers challenge and risk.

A portion of the proposed project area has been delineated a Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) class of Rural (R). Rural physical and social recreation setting is culturally modified to the point that it is dominant to the sensitive travel route observer. This may include pastoral, agricultural, intensively managed wildland resource landscapes, or utility corridors. Pedestrian or other slow moving observers are constantly within view of culturally changed landscape. There is strong evidence of designed roads and/or highways. Structures are readily apparent and may range from scattered to small dominant clusters including utility corridors, farm buildings, microwave installations, and recreation sites. Frequency of contact is moderate to high at developed sites and on roads and trails; moderate away from developed sites.
Rural recreation experience is characterized by a low probability of isolation from the sights and sounds of humans.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: If construction action coincides with hunting seasons (September through November) it will most likely disrupt the experience sought by those recreationists.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No loss of dispersed recreation potential and no impact to hunting recreationists.

Mitigation: Due to high use big game hunting seasons, construction should not take place during the period of October 15th through November 11th.

VISUAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: The proposed actions would be located in an area with VRM II and VRM III classifications. The objective of the VRM II class is to retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be low. Management activities may be seen, but should not attract the attention of the casual observer. Any changes must repeat the basic elements of form, line, color, and texture found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape. The objective of the VRM III class is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate. Management activities may attract attention but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. Changes should repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed actions would be located near the top of a plateau with access through privately owned land. The proposed actions would not be visible from state highway 13, RBC #5, or the BLM Cow Creek Access, which would be the routes traveled by a casual observer. A limited number of seasonal big game

hunters accessing the area by foot, horseback, or by vehicle through private property would be able to view the proposed actions, but their view would not be dominated by the proposed actions. By painting all above ground facilities Juniper Green to mimic and blend with background vegetation, the level of change to the characteristic landscape would be low, and the objectives of the VRM II classification would be retained.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no impacts.

Mitigation: All above ground facilities shall be painted Juniper Green, unless safety issues require special warning colors.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY: This action is consistent with the scope of impacts addressed in the White River ROD/RMP. The cumulative impacts of these activities are addressed in the White River ROD/RMP for each resource value that would be affected by the proposed action.

REFERENCES CITED:

Conner, Carl E.
2005 Class III Cultural Resources Inventory for the Proposed Encana/Woodward Air Station, Powerline, and Access in Rio Blanco County, Colorado for White River Electric Association, Inc., (for EnCana Oil and Gas (USA), Inc). Grand River Institute, Grand Junction, Colorado.

Tweto, Ogden
1979 Geologic Map of Colorado. United States Geologic Survey, Department of the Interior, Reston, Virginia.

PERSONS / AGENCIES CONSULTED: None

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

Name	Title	Area of Responsibility
Nate Dieterich	Hydrologist	Air Quality
Tamara Meagley	Natural Resource Specialist	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
Tamara Meagley	Natural Resource Specialist	Threatened and Endangered Plant Species
Michael Selle	Archeologist	Cultural Resources Paleontological Resources
Robert Fowler	Rangeland Management Specialist	Invasive, Non-Native Species
Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Migratory Birds
Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Animal Species, Wildlife
Bo Brown	Hazmat Collateral	Wastes, Hazardous or Solid
Nate Dieterich	Hydrologist	Water Quality, Surface and Ground Hydrology and Water Rights
Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Wetlands and Riparian Zones
Chris Ham	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Wilderness
Nate Dieterich	Hydrologist	Soils
Robert Fowler	Rangeland Management Specialist	Vegetation
Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife Terrestrial and Aquatic
Chris Ham	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Access and Transportation
Ken Holsinger	Natural Resource Specialist	Fire Management
Robert Fowler	Forester	Forest Management
Paul Daggett	Mining Engineer	Geology and Minerals
Robert Fowler	Rangeland Management Specialist	Rangeland Management
Penny Brown	Realty Specialist	Realty Authorizations
Chris Ham	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Recreation
Keith Whitaker	Natural Resource Specialist	Visual Resources
Valerie Dobrich	Natural Resource Specialist	Wild Horses

Finding of No Significant Impact/Decision Record (FONSI/DR)

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FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)/RATIONALE: The environmental assessment and analyzing the environmental effects of the proposed action have been reviewed. The approved mitigation measures (listed below) result in a Finding of No Significant Impact on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary to further analyze the environmental effects of the proposed action.

DECISION/RATIONALE: It is my decision to approve the construction of the powerline connection and to install an air monitoring station as described in the proposed action, with the mitigation measures listed below. This development, with mitigation, is consistent with the decisions in the White River ROD/RMP, and environmental impacts will be minimal.

MITIGATION MEASURES:

1. The permit holder is required to control noxious weeds resulting from the project development. Treatments will be in accordance with Bureau policy.

2. Reclamation should be implemented concurrent with construction and site operations to the fullest extent possible. Final reclamation actions shall be initiated within six months of the termination of operations unless otherwise approved in writing by the Authorized Officer.

3. Distribute topsoil evenly over the location and prepare a seedbed by disking or ripping. Drill seed on contour at a depth no greater than ½ inch. In areas that cannot be drilled, broadcast at double the seeding rate and harrow seed into the soil.

4. Use seed that is certified and free of noxious weeds. Seed certification tags must be submitted to the Field Manager.

5. Additional seed applications may be required to accommodate specific site conditions or if initial seed germination has failed.

6. Seed species used in reseeding disturbed areas will be based on the seed mixes identified in table B1 and B2 in the White River ROD/RMP. These mixes are based on Ecological Sites as determined by soils. For this site use native seed mix # 6 (see table below). Naturalized plant species will be allowed for reseeding on "at risk" and "unhealthy" rangelands and grazable woodlands.

Native Seed Mix #6		
Species (Variety)	Lbs. PLS per Acre	Ecological Sites
Bluebunch wheatgrass (Secar) Slender wheatgrass (Primar) Big Bluegrass (Sherman) Canby bluegrass (Canbar) Mountain brome (Bromer)	2 2 1 1 2	Alpine Meadow, Alpine Slopes, Aspen Woodlands, Brushy Loam, Deep clay Loam, Douglas-fir Woodland, Loamy Park, Mountain Loam, Mountain Meadows, Mountain Swale, Shallow Subalpine, Spruce-fir Woodland, Subalpine Loam

7. The applicant will be responsible for employing the most-current raptor protection standards (i.e., minimum standards from "Suggested Practices for Raptor Protection on Power Lines: The State of the Art in 1996", Avian Power Line Interaction Committee, 1996) on all above ground electric service to prevent raptor electrocution.

8. The applicant shall be required to collect and properly dispose of any solid wastes generated by the proposed actions.

9. To mitigate water being channelized down the roadway due to rut development, all activity must stop when soils or road surfaces become saturated to a depth of three inches.

10. Avoid using the existing two-track when soils are saturated t a depth of three inches. Apply adequate ground cover and appropriate seed mixture (see vegetation section) to disturbed surfaces associated with the buried secondary conductor line.

11. Due to high use during big game hunting seasons, construction should not take place during the period of October 15th through November 11th.

12. All above ground facilities shall be painted Juniper Green, unless safety issues require special warning colors.

13. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not necessary)
- a timeframe for the AO to complete an expedited review under 36 CFR 800-11 to confirm, through the State Historic Preservation Officer, that the findings of the AO are correct and that mitigation is appropriate.

If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or

the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

14. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.

15. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing paleontological sites, or for collecting fossils. If fossil materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear to be of noteworthy scientific interest
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not feasible)

If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

16. Except for the setting of power poles with an auger vehicle a monitor shall be required for any excavations into the underlying rock formation.

COMPLIANCE/MONITORING: Compliance will be conducted by the realty staff every five years.

NAME OF PREPARER: Penny Brown

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: Caroline Hollowed

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL: _____
Field Manager

DATE SIGNED: 11/16/05

ATTACHMENTS: Location map of the Proposed Action

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Location of Proposed Action
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